

Senate Confirms Bush as CIA Director

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WASHINGTON—The Senate confirmed the nomination of George Bush as director of the embattled Central Intelligence Agency Tuesday, rejecting protests by some Democrats that his political background would thwart restoration of public confidence in the CIA.

The vote was 64 to 27, with only one Republican, Sen. Jesse Helms of North Carolina, voting against the nomination. Helms said that Bush was "not the best qualified man for the job."

Another Republican, Lowell P. Weicker Jr. of Connecticut, voted "present." Weicker said he could not support Bush because of his past political activities.

Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif.) was among the 26 Democrats opposing Bush. Sen. John V. Tunney (D-Calif.) was absent and did not vote.

Although Bush was opposed mainly by Democratic liberals, he also received considerable liberal support from among the 30 Democrats and 34 Republicans who voted for him.

Bush's most recent job has been chief of the U.S. Liaison Office in Peking. But it was his political past, particularly his role as Republican national chairman in the waning months of the Nixon Administration, that generated the opposition to his confirmation.

Bush also has been a two-term House member from Texas, twice an unsuccessful candidate for the Senate, and a U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.

Even his Democratic critics conceded that Bush had demonstrated integrity and ability in all of his jobs and said they could support him for almost any other post in government.

But they argued that at a time when the CIA was reeling from disclosures of misdeeds and illegal activities, Bush was not the right choice to restore public trust in the agency.

"We cannot have a rehabilitation of the agency without a restoration of public confidence," said Sen. Thomas J. McIntyre (D-N.H.), leader of the opposition. "A person so vulnerable to political subornation doesn't inspire confidence."

On the other hand, some of Bush's supporters contended that his political astuteness to stand up to a President who wanted the CIA to undertake a misdeed.

"All of the recent (CIA) directors have told me they have done things they knew were wrong but that they did them because the President wanted them to do it," said Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.), one of Bush's strongest defenders. "I think George Bush has demonstrated the ability to stand up to the President."

Despite the strong feelings expressed both by critics and supporters, there were seldom more than a dozen senators on the floor during the two-hour round of speeches preceding the vote. Bush's wife watched the proceedings from the gallery and at times appeared angered by remarks critical of her husband.

As CIA director, Bush will succeed William E. Colby, who was fired by President Ford last November but was asked to stay on until Bush was confirmed.

Since its creation in 1947, the CIA has had eight directors, of which three have come from the military, three from private or government careers and two from within the agency. Bush will be the first director with a political background.

Sens. Gary Hart (D-Colo.) and Joseph R. Biden Jr. (D-Del.) argued that the tradition of nonpolitical directors should be maintained.

"We need a man with the demonstrable capacity to tell the President he is all wet," Biden said.

Sen. Frank Church (D-Ida.), chairman of the Senate select committee that has exposed many of the CIA's wrongdoings, said:

"The new director should be someone with the strength of resolution to tell the President: 'I believe your premise to be wrong for it is refuted by the unvarnished facts gathered by the CIA.'"

"This is the vital role that the Central Intelligence Agency can play in our government but it will work only if the director is immune to political pressure," he said.

However, Sen. Clifford P. Case (R-N.J.) countered that Bush's critics were making too much of the CIA directorship.

"This job does not require a super human being and, if it does, something is wrong with the system and the job ought to be abolished," Case said. "What the job requires is a man with talent and this man has it in abundance."